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Reflection of National Education Policy of India 2020 in the Cartoons of R. K. Laxman

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Introduction- R. K. Laxman, Rasipuram Krishna swamy Laxman, was born on 24 October 1921 in Mysore and died on 26 January 2015 in Pune, India. He is called the king of cartoons since he gave India's Common Man a voice. No one skipped from his cheerful criticism not even his signature character 'Common Man'. The researcher calls him prophet as many predictions (what he criticized) he depicted in his cartoons are envisaged in 2020, though he died in 2015. As a school going boy Laxman did not like the school and study. He mentioned this in his autography The Tunnel of Time that how arid and dreary were school days as some unpleasant events were related with his school time and school teachers. So, he strongly anticipates the changes in the Education Policy through his cartoons. He raised the questions either wittily or humorously about school, teachers and students. It ironically manifests lacunas in Education System of India.

Surprisingly enough most of the issues, Laxman raised, are tried to be rectified in the New Education Policy 2020 of India as Indian Government "Education is fundamental for achieving full human potential, developing an equitable and just society, and promoting national development" (Ministry of Human Resource Development).

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I. Introduction

R. K. Laxman, Rasipuram Krishnaswamy Laxman, was born on 24 October 1921 in Mysore and died on 26 January 2015 in Pune, India. He is called the king of cartoons since he gave India's Common Man a voice. No one skipped from his cheerful criticism not even his signature character 'Common Man'. The researcher calls him prophet as many predictions (what he criticized) he depicted in his cartoons are envisaged in 2020, though he died in 2015. As a school going boy Laxman did not like the school and study. He mentioned this in his autography The Tunnel of Time that how arid and dreary were school days as some unpleasant events were related with his school time and school teachers. So, he strongly anticipates the changes in the Education Policy through his cartoons. He raised the questions either wittily or humorously about school, teachers and students. It ironically manifests lacunas in Education System of India.

Surprisingly enough most of the issues, Laxman raised, are tried to be rectified in the New Education Policy 2020 of India as Indian Government "Education is fundamental for achieving full human potential, developing an equitable and just society, and promoting national development" (Ministry of Human Resource Development). p3. Significant measures have been enrolled towards reducing the discrepancy of female dropouts in school. So hereby the girl child, too, has some reason to be hopeful. The policy recognizes the additional barriers in education that plague female education, particularly at the primary level. The most serious flaw is the least allotted fund for girl-child education. To overcome this barrier, the Government of India has designed to constitute a "'Gender-Inclusion Fund' to build the nation's capacity to provide equitable quality education for all girls" (Ministry of Human Resource Development). p 26. Laxman has repeatedly pointed this issue through his art of illustration. Because he is an illustrator and humorist par excellence who's on-the-point cartoons speak a thousand words about such live issues. In the Fig.1, where Laxman has specified girl-child issue showing the contradiction. As in the *Fig.1* very serious issue is raised by Laxman where the mother as well her girl child in her lap carrying the load on their head at work-site and the board is hung behind them scribed with words "International Women's Day". The mother is shown uttering the harsh future of the girl, "Learn to balance it properly, silly girl! Remember, soon you will have to start working!" (Laxman R. , The Best Of Laxman-Vol-IV, 1995).p99. Here the Common Man's 'seeing' is not worthless who is the counterpart of each common man and foresees girls' dark future without education. The irony in the picture provokes the thought what's the value of International Women's Day if the girls are bound to take work in complete disproportion to their strengths and abilities and averted from birth-right of education. This thought provoking 'seeing' let not people blunt and indifferent at the social issue. Moreover, the issue, of largest percentage of girls working at the cost of education in India is seriously underlined. And so UNISEF has strongly proposed, "Gender-equitable access to quality education from early childhood to adolescence, including for children with disabilities, marginalized children and those living in humanitarian and emergency settings. (unisef). India's new education policy has under propped the opinion saying as, "Education is fundamental for achieving full human potential, developing an equitable and just society, and promoting national development" (Ministry of Human Resource Development).P3. So, Ministry of Human Resource Development has devoted a complete section for "Equitable and Inclusive Education: Learning for All."



Fig.1

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Above point of equitable opportunity of learning is further expanded with broader vision as it is quoted, "an inclusive and equitable society in which every citizen has the opportunity to dream, thrive, and contribute to the nation. The education system must aim to benefit India's children so that no child loses any opportunity to learn and excel because of circumstances of birth or background" (Ministry of Human Resource Development). P24. This perspective is prominently embossed in the *Fig. 2* where two cartoons having extreme disproportion of standard are juxtaposed. Susmita Sen and Aishwarya Ray won the Miss Universe and Miss world crowns respectively in 1984. The entertainment industry along with sport held the nation in thrall as much as politics did. The woman in first figure is happy after listening the news and says, "I am proud of the spectacular transformations and improvements which are taking place among women of India" (Laxman R. , 2005). P178. In the second fig. the father is answering the son "I don't know what it is if I could read I would have told you whether it is an election poster or cinema poster" (Laxman R., 2005). P178. After reading both the cartoons readers get entertained as well as begin to think over the social inequality, financial inequality in Indian society. The women like Sushmita Sen and Aishwarya Rai are getting world fame while some women are still fighting to earn their day's bread and butter, and some are people are even illiterate. So it may be aptly said, "It is indispensable as a teaching tool that displays the many vicissitudes of Indian democracy over the years" (Chatterjee S. , 2007). After reading the issue, the researcher strongly asserts Laxman's cartoons serve social functionalism.

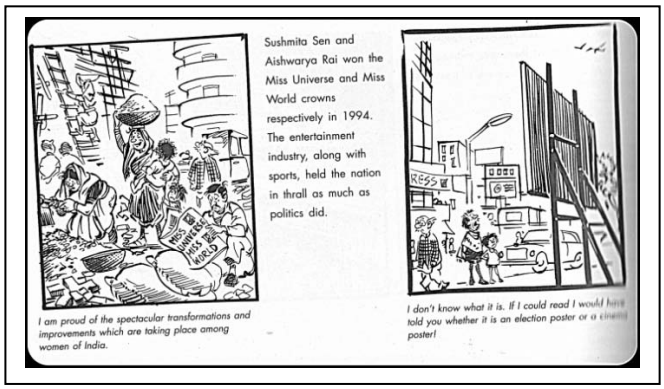

Fig. 2

As it is rightly stated by Maheipeu Nadang, "Marks oriented education system mercilessly murdered the curiosity of an inquisitive young Mind." Everyone who cares for children agrees that the main motto of education is to provide necessary inputs to one to understand, learn, grow and share with society. But this is forgotten by parents as well as teacher. In the *Fig.3* father is angry with his child after seeing his marksheet, "I am ashamed of you! How can I show my face to the public! You expect admission to any college with these miserable marks-88.75%?" (Laxman R., The Best of Laxman-Vol-3, 1994). p22. The Common Man presents there might be thinking if 88.75% is miserable marks! How much does he expect? In such a case, parental pressure is the most damaging factor. The boy in the cartoon appears stressed as he cannot live up to his parents' high expectations. In fact, every parent knows his child's potential but is not ready to accept it. They think they can push the child beyond his capacity by pressurizing him. Trying to get admission on merit basis makes the mindset of society, of parents, of teachers, of students, overambitious leading them to mere frustration.



Fig. 3

Teachers truly matrix the future of our children - and, eventually, the future of our nation. It is because of this sublime role, the teacher in India was the most respected member of society. Only the very best and most talented would become teachers. But with the passing time, the situation changed, and some began to enter into the field of teaching to earn more and to work less. Such kind of mentality poisoned and tainted the most pious world of teaching. Laxman's further cartoon reflects humorously where students are in mood to celebrate the teachers' strike to manifest their disinterestedness towards school so they say, "Good News Boys! The talks have failed! They aren't getting a pay hike. The strike will continue." It shows that teachers failed to maintain the interest of students and motivate them. So, to rectify and regulate, government has taken the strict and corrective stand for teacher's shaping, "To gauge passion and motivation for teaching, a classroom demonstration or interview will become an integral part of teacher hiring at schools and school complexes. These interviews would also be used to assess comfort and proficiency in teaching in the local language" (Ministry of Human Resource Development). P20. To test and reform teachers' mindset and to attain the desired standards of education, Ministry of Human Resource Development has planned strictly, "Teacher Eligibility Tests (TETs) will be strengthened to inculcate better test material, both in terms of content and pedagogy. The TETs will also be extended to cover

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teachers across all stages (Foundational, Preparatory, Middle and Secondary) of school education"(Ministry of Human Resource Development). P20.

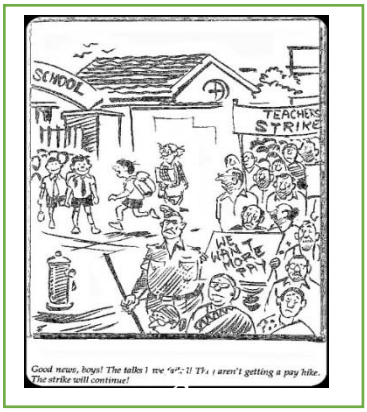

Fig. 4

Laxman shows us the absurdity of academics' evaluation yardstick, which does not account for the individuality of the student, rather pressurizes them to the extent of creating anxiety. Examination stress is a matter of worry elsewhere in the world. This point is humorously depicted in the *Fig.52B* where the boy though is felled with a car dash appears to be very happy and relieved saying "It's OK, sir. Anything is pleasant after answering those exam papers!" (Laxman R., The Best Of Laxman-Vol-IV, 1995). p 96. Taking into consideration of absurdity of evaluating students as shown in the cartoon. HRD ministry has set the goal of the school education regulatory system which imparts,"----continually improve educational outcomes; it must not overly restrict schools, prevent innovation, or demoralize teachers, principals, and students. All in all, regulation must aim to empower schools and teachers with trust, enabling them to strive for excellence and perform at their very best" and it will regulate an effective quality self-regulation or accreditation system to institute for all stages of education consisting,"----pre-school education- private, public, and philanthropic - to ensure compliance with essential quality standards"(Ministry of Human Resource Development). P31.



Fig. 5

In India, exams have been a matter of stress for the pupils. Parental pressure for children to excel in their studies has been unusually high. As shown in the cartoon figure-- the father's face reveals his anger and dissatisfaction at the confusion of his child when he says, "If you are so confused you will not come to any good. Listen, those are last week's pre-exam papers and these are tomorrow's pre-exam papers! "(R. Laxman, The Best Of Laxman-Volume IV). P89. Laxman shows us the absurdity of academics' evaluation yardstick which does not account for the individuality of the student rather pressurize them to the extent of creating anxiety. That is set to correct in new education policy. Schooling does not always direct to learning. Globally, there are more non-learners in school than out of school. Children most of the time get bored with the compulsory subjects, they are bound to face them because there is no option for them. Besides there is parents' pressure to adapt with subjects they dislike. Sometime the medium of language is the main hurdle in their learning especially in India, because India is multilingual nation. In this 21st century English medium is welcomed as a way to drive towards technology and science. Students from village can't cope the speed of learning in foreign language as their mother tongue is different. So HRD Ministry has taken right steps to stop, "-------the overemphasis on inputs, and the mechanistic nature of their specifications – physical and infrastructural – will be changed and requirements made more responsive to realities on the ground, e.g., regarding land areas and room sizes, practicalities of playgrounds in urban areas"(Ministry of Human Resource Development). P 32.



Fig. 6

In the cartoon *Fig.53* Laxman has ironically pointed out how does education in India produce labourer through the schools instead of making them competent in skillful profession. In the cartoon, the workers are shown unloading the truck carrying the sacks on their back whereas the pupil is also shown standing aghast open-mouthed carrying the load of school-bag on his back. Seeing his surprise, the worker understands a question in a mind of child that 'where did

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he learn to carry such a heavy load on the back? In addition, answers him, "Of course, I too went to school. Where do you think I learnt to carry like this" (Laxman R., The Best Of Laxman-Vol-IV, 1995). P61. Here Laxman follows the example of R.K.Narayan, his brother, who during his entire six-year term in Rajyasabha gave his first and last speech on the plight of school children, especially the overload of school bag, homework and stifling of a child's natural creativity. That resulted in the formation of a committee chaired by Prof. Yash Pal to recommend changes in India's school educational system. It may be found here the words of Narayan and Cartoons of Laxman explain the same thing. Laxman wants to condemn the educational system making the school going and learning equally monotonous and arduous without thinking mental, emotional and physical condition of a child. The issue is religiously mentioned in the new policy and emphasized Holistic, Integrated, Enjoyable, and Engaging learning.



Fig. 7

The researcher wants to show issues related to education in India in the context of R.K. Laxman's view about Education Policy reflected in New Education Policy of India. Laxman's cartoons begin with realistic settings in the lives of students where his Common Man meets the students, teachers and parents. Being sharp observers Laxman reveals the drawbacks in the Education System subtly and his microscopic vision has provided the correctives for India's Education Policy.

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